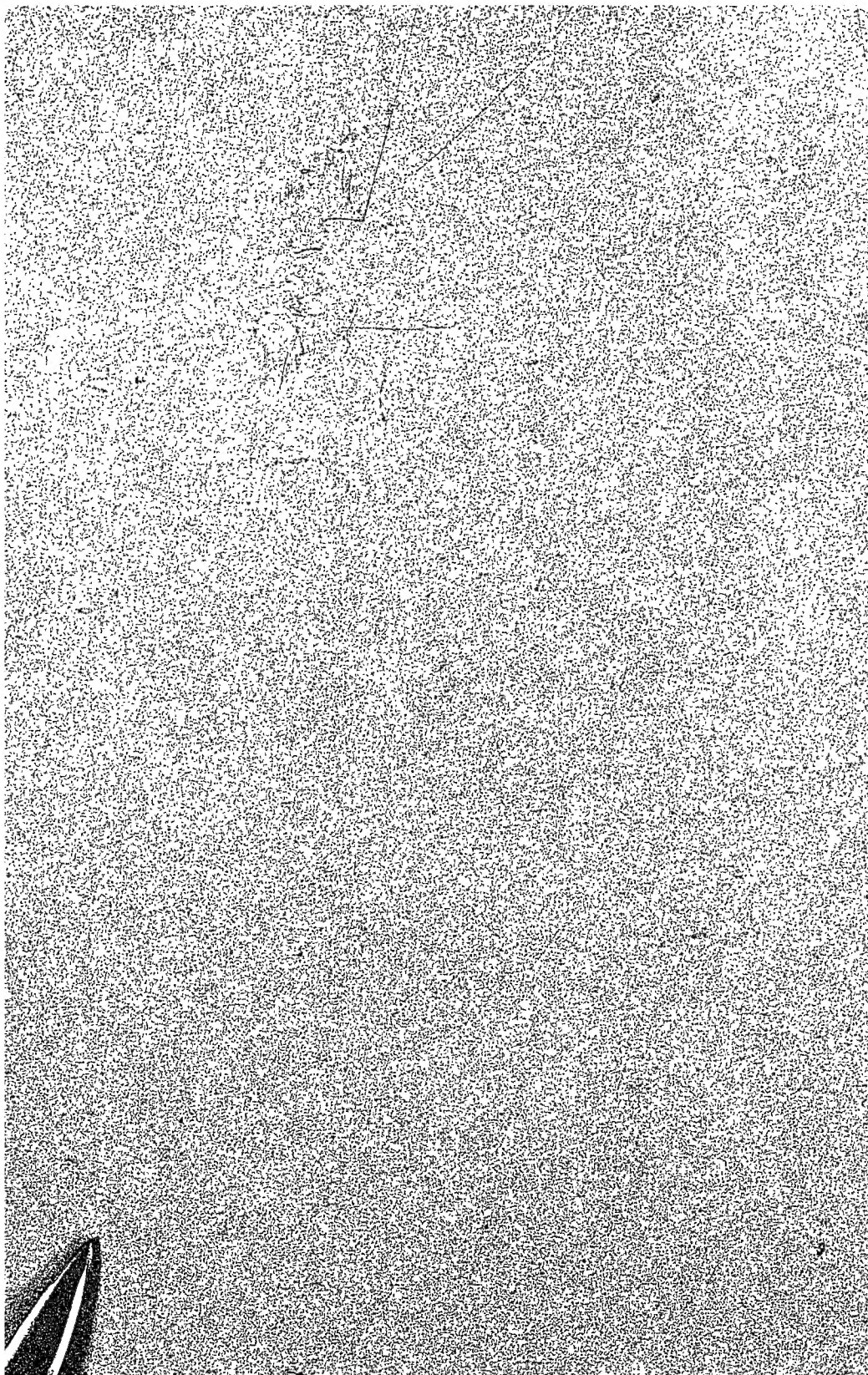



REMINISCENCES OF  
PIONEER DAYS IN  
THE WEST



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# Reminiscences of Pioneer Days in the West

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*Written through the encouragement of the Saskatchewan  
Archives, Regina, Saskatchewan and covering experiences at*

BELMONT, MAN.

GIROUX, MAN.

WOODRIDGE, MAN.

HUMBOLDT, SASK.


ATIKOKEN, ONT.

KAMSACK, SASK.

WARROAD, MINNESOTA

PELLY, SASK.

*during the years 1902 to 1914*



In the summer of 1902 I was employed as a relief telegrapher and worked in Melita, Hartney, Souris and Belmont in Southern Manitoba. There was a magnificent crop of high grade wheat in all those districts and harvest weather was all that could be desired. The heavy crop overtaxed the railways, more particularly the Canadian Northern, and squabbles over car distribution were the order of the day. The provisions of the Canada Grain Act put a farmer in the same position as a grain elevator with regard to car distribution. There were no grain loading platforms and the farmers had to load directly from wagon to car and this meant serious delay as against the quick mechanical operations of the grain elevators. The railways, therefore, did all they could to favour the elevators. There was a wide difference in the net return to the farmer loading his own car over what he could get by selling directly to the elevators; accordingly, the efforts of the farmers to secure cars were terrific. The instructions given the station agents were not clear and for a time there was great confusion. Subsequently one station agent was sentenced to a short term in jail for failing to follow the grain act.

All unfilled car orders were cancelled at 6 p.m. Saturday and in the afternoon farmers began to line up at the station wicket and at 6 o'clock were booked in the order in which they stood in line. Sometimes there were quarrels among the farmers over their places in line but, generally they conducted themselves admirably and worked out among themselves any matters of dispute. The hero of the hour appeared to be Premier Roblin of Manitoba to whom the farmers gave credit for legislative and administrative acts on their behalf though the Canada Grain Act was a federal statute. At a crucial period the premier, in response to farmers' complaints had taken swift action to enforce the law and after this the instructions to station agents were clear and concise and there was little further trouble.

Woodridge, where I spent the winter and part of the summer of 1903, was a solid forest country of timber and cordwood, about 1,000 men working in the bush at that time. There were many homesteaders but practically no clearings and such settlers had to earn their living by work in camps. There were less than a dozen people who could speak English; about twenty percent were French and the balance French halfbreeds, the Metis. Black bears were in hundreds and seemed quite harmless but were bothersome about the camps.

Occasionally, I was invited to have Sunday dinner at the main lumber camp ten miles from town, the foreman sending in a team for me. The cooks used large iron pots to cook their potatoes; these pots would hold a bushel or more and tapered in near the neck. When the potatoes were cooked the pots were usually set outside to cool. One Sunday in camp we were disturbed by loud and strange noises and everybody rushed out. A black bear had been helping himself to the hot potatoes when his head got caught in the narrow neck of the pot. The rumpus he made would have awakened the dead and though serious for the poor animal was one of the funniest things I had ever seen. Several of the men rushed out with rifles but the foreman said. No! the poor bear wasn't hurting anyone. After terrific efforts for about twenty minutes he managed to get his head freed and lumbered off into the bush.

Trainloads of jackpine and tamarac were being shipped for fuel to Winnipeg which at that time probably used more wood than coal.

There were hundreds of acres of blueberries and Metis women and children earned a lot of money in the summer by steadily picking the fruit which found a ready market in Winnipeg. Shortly after my arrival in Woodridge I was invited to a Metis dance and with some boys from the village tramped six miles in the forest to a small cabin where we were given a hearty welcome by the family. The standard of living of these people was

shockingly low' as compared with that of the average Canadian but they were very happy, appeared contented with their lot and hospitality was their second name. The only furniture in the cabin was a small table and a heater stove, called in those days a tin heater. Some boxes held what dishes and cutlery there were and blankets rolled up on the floor apparently sufficed for sleeping. Seats of hewn logs attached to the wall served as chairs. The walls were well whitewashed and sitting with their backs to the wall all the guests were generously marked with lime. After a long walk and several hours dancing we were ready for eats and I had been wondering just how we were to be fed. However, promptly at midnight bannock was rolled out on the table and baked in a frying pan over the heater; served hot with blackstrap and black tea it was thoroughly appetizing. Perhaps I was surprised to find everything scrupulously clean and one had no reservation on that score. These Metis were big powerful men and excellent axe men though the French Canadian foremen complained that they had a tendency, frequently, to take some days off. They used a good many words that were Cree and strangely enough, some that a Kildonan man told me were Gaelic. Their forebears worked for the Hudson's Bay Company for many generations and as most of the company men were Highland Scotsmen this was not so surprising.

Atikokan, in 1903 was an important divisional point on what was then the main line of the C.N.R. There appeared to be no agricultural land in the district which consisted of swamp, rock and tundra. The hamlet was made up of a hotel, wholesale liquor store, general store and roundhouse with but one frame house and a number of shacks. Train and engine crews lived either at Rainy River or Port Arthur.

There was but one eating place and the guests were served at a long table and at meal-time made up a family party. As was the general custom at that time the food was not served directly but large bowls and platters were passed around and the boarders helped themselves. A general favorite in the district was an interesting and humorous character, Captain Wood, a civil war veteran and a mining engineer who still carried a Confederate bullet in his shoulder. Seated at breakfast with the Captain on the morning of my arrival I enquired as to the contents of a large bowl on the table. "That, my friend," replied the Captain, "is Atikokan antelope." The general round of smiles made me curious until I found it was rabbit hash. When I asked if ever they got domestic meat our humorist replied, "we have here all the succulence and variety that heart or stomach could desire, rabbit hash for breakfast, stewed rabbit for lunch and fried rabbit for supper; then for variety the next day we start with the fried rabbit for breakfast and end up with the hash for supper; thus," continued the Captain, "we have an excellent variety of good wholesome food sufficiently diversified." When there were serious complaints at the table our veteran friend reminded us that what we were served was ambrosia, food for the gods, as compared with what he was fed in the Confederate prisons and generally better than his dear Uncle Sam gave his fighting men in the 60's.

It was nearly one hundred miles to Fort Francis the nearest farming district and, there, the local market far exceeded the supply. Rainy River with probably about 3,000 people surrounded by forest was a bustling place and claimed the largest saw mill in Canada employing about a thousand men. So with the absence of refrigeration it was not surprising that fresh domestic meat was practically unobtainable.

Captain Wood would console us with his philosophy and remind us that here we had striking evidence of "Nature's Compensation" denied supplies from the farm a benign Providence had provided for our needs a superabundance of Atikokan Antelope.

In my three months in Atikokan I never saw a deer or a bear but the lack of large animals was made up by the plethora of rabbits which were everywhere in hundreds.

There were a dozen or more diamond drilling outfits looking for iron ore in 1903. Some time later, this work was discontinued as the ore located was not rich enough to warrant development. It was to be many years before the present rich deposits were to be discovered at the bottom of the beautiful little Steep Rock Lake.

The town of Warroad, where I was a relief station agent during two months of the winter of 1903-04, was somewhat in the traditional position of Mahomet's coffin, resting in air neither in Heaven nor on earth. Built in a small strip of territory in north eastern Minnesota it had no direct connection with any settled portion of the state, nor even a wagon road, except through Canadian territory via the C.N.R. Most all supplies came from St. Paul and Minneapolis in bond via Winnipeg which meant long delays in transportation and sometimes in customs.

The town, completely surrounded by forest, had about 900 people served by a hotel, customs house, the usual stores and five licensed saloons; the latter were a surprise to a Canadian accustomed to drinking places only where room and meal service was provided.

Lumbering operations were carried on in the forest but much of the territory was held by homesteaders who were interested, as they must be at that time, more in the timber than in the soil. I heard a great deal about the summer sports and activities on the Lake of the Woods, to which the town had access. However, I was never there in summer and am unable to speak of those.

"Where every prospect pleases" is about the last phrase I would have applied to Warroad when I arrived there just before Christmas, in 1903. However, there was a true western spirit in the place that almost fascinated a visitor. There was no place for the pessimist; optimism was the watchword and there existed a spirit of co-operation that boded well for the future of the community.

"Just think" said one of the town ladies to me, "five saloons, a hotel bar and no church." However a young Baptist minister came in and held church service every fourth Sunday. He always had good interest shown by his congregation and was looking forward to a church being built in the near future.

One incident that will always remain in my memory was the marriage, under great difficulties, of a young couple in the homestead area living twelve or fifteen miles from the town. A date for the wedding had been set on the day the young minister was scheduled to arrive. It may be said that there were no telephones in that area and mail service was slow so that ordinarily, such pre-arrangements were quite in order. It was a shock to the parties concerned when the minister on arrival informed them that he was not, as yet, ordained and, therefore unable to perform the ceremony. The disappointed young man who met the train with a team was, naturally, upset and consulted a group of citizens over his problem. It was decided to telegraph a Methodist Minister at Rainy River asking him to come on tomorrow's train and officiate. This man was well known in Warroad and as he was known to be at home no difficulty had been dreamed of. Accordingly, the guests were sent home and advised to come back the following day. But the Nemesis was not yet through with the young couple. Next day

a reply came from the Rainy River clergyman advising that he would have been delighted to oblige but, as a Canadian Minister, the laws of Minnesota would not permit him to perform the ceremony. Again the team came in over the long difficult road through the forest only to meet with another frustration.

By this time it had ceased to be a private affair and the whole town decided that something must be done. The question was . . . just what? a citizens meeting was informed that there was a fellow homesteader five or six miles from the homes of the young people whom he, the spokesman, had known in another district. He was a justice of the peace and legally able to perform a marriage ceremony. The spokesman said that he likely would be found fast asleep and, as usual, difficult to handle. Three husky volunteers offered to get him by kidnapping if necessary. They were advised to tidy him up as best they could and to pay no attention to any objections. Get him there, awake and alert if possible, but get him . . . Be sure and take his law books which would be found somewhere in the cabin.

How the three strong and determined men finally delivered the reluctant J.P. with his books at the home of the bride is a story in itself and was told and retold many times in Warroad. He was sufficiently awakened by the time of his arrival to realize what was expected of him and what would happen to him if he balked. He had never before married a couple but with some help he finally got through the ritual much to the relief of the participants. The held over mince pies, cakes, venison and other eats made a grand supper. Everyone had a good time and the difficulties and delays seemed to add spice to the gathering. All were happy except the bride's mother who, sizing up the J.P., his appearance and his actions had strong reservations and considered it questionable whether her daughter was really married. So, she forbade the girl to go home with the young man.

The following morning he came again to town with his problem and a council of war was held by the citizens to determine the next action. After some discussion it was decided that the young people should go to Rainy River. It took some telegraphing to make necessary arrangements with the Methodist Minister and the couple took the train with the blessings of the townspeople. Money wasn't a plentiful commodity among homesteaders and the burghers backed their wishes with their dollar bills and made a substantial cash wedding present to the happy young people. When they returned to Warroad duly spliced the local ladies put on a real banquet in their honour.

The plight of the young people and the final solution showed "those little acts of kindness that make the whole world kin."

Verily, "kind hearts are more than coronets."

Giroux, 35 miles east of Winnipeg, was a small village in 1904 but fairly important from the railway standpoint. It was in a good farming district and was the shipping and receiving point for the Mennonite village and settlement of Steinbach, 9 miles south. The latter was one of the first settlements of this sect in the Canadian prairies and was established over the period from 1869 to 1875. Following their custom in Russia most of the Mennonite farmers lived in the village which to the sect was a social and religious, as well as a business centre. Nearer the station the farmers were old stock Canadians both English and French and the settlement was long past the pioneer stage with well tilled farms, comfortable homes and good farm buildings.

One thing that struck me forcibly was the fact that race, language and religion were no barriers to social and business intercourse. The French, young and old, spoke English freely and, language, therefore, was no problem. The young folks, English speaking and French attended dances

together and worked together in sports and all other activities. The French priest, Father Giroux and the Presbyterian minister, Mr. McFarlane visited one another and were the best of friends.

While I was there an application for a bar license for Giroux stirred up a lot of controversy and priest and minister joined forces to fight it. Their joint efforts were successful and the district was still dry when I left there.

The Mennonites kept aloof from other people and, generally, only the business men spoke English. It would appear that the religious leaders were anxious to keep their young people apart from all others in order to preserve their own ways of life, religious and social. However, there was no doubt that they were competent farmers and shrewd and successful business men. There was no railroad when the Steinbach settlement was established; they had arrived from Russia via New York, rail to St. Paul, Minnesota and flat bottom steamboat down the Red River.

Many years later in South Western Saskatchewan I met a number of sons and grandsons of Mennonites I had known in Steinbach. The difference in outlook had been completely bridged and there was no distinction between them and old stock Canadians.

I heard many interesting accounts of the pioneer days of Giroux 25 to 30 years previously when the country was largely forest. I may mention one that the people laughed about though it might have ended tragically. One of the early settlers coming home got caught in a terrible blizzard and was completely lost. (Years later in another forest district I had some nasty experiences myself and I know how completely one loses all sense of direction in a country served only by rough bush trails and with few landmarks. Horses often show an uncanny sense in finding their way when men are completely baffled.)

In this case our old timer realized that his team was nearly played out and it is not unusual for a lover of horses to think first of his animals. He finally came to a high bank of snow affording some shelter from the storm. He let his horses go and sheltered himself under the overturned wagon box with his hay and horses' blankets for a bed. By kicking vigorously and rolling around he managed to save himself from freezing.

When some daylight appeared he found to his relief and to his humiliation that he had been parked up against his own woodpile and his horses were standing shivering at his stable door.

I arrived in Humboldt in midsummer 1905 being the first station agent there. That town was the end of the steel as far as the operating department of the Canadian Northern Railway was concerned. Grades were in patches between there and Battleford and steel was being laid as rapidly as grades were ready for it. The construction company carried freight of all kinds to the end of steel when tracks were in shape for such traffic. Humboldt had about 800 people, a hotel, a restaurant, stores, lumber yard, bank and most of the lines of the small town business. Settlers were coming, in thousands, long trains of livestock and effects overtaxed the railroad. Stock was unloaded at the end of steel and settlers moved long distances over the rutty trails to the farms. Passenger trains arriving from the East left hundreds of passengers most of whom spent the nights on the station platform or anywhere they could lie down. A work train next morning would take them as far as the work and the state of the track permitted. As far as I remember it was late in the spring before the steel reached Battleford. Transportation like everything else was topsy turvy but everybody seemed optimistic and cheerful.

There was a wonderful pioneer spirit in the new West and few complaints were heard. On the recently acquired farms, shacks were hurriedly put up and permanent work started on the land. Game was in abundance — ducks, geese, prairie chicken and partridge as well as deer but most people were too busy to do any hunting. As a consequence the wild creatures were so tame that it was a common thing to see ducks, chickens and partridge mixing with farm poultry. I recall an amusing incident that fall when three Humboldt townsmen went for an early morning duck hunt. On a small lake adjoining some farm buildings they spotted what they took to be a fine flock of mallards. In a few minutes they had killed a dozen or more and were just fishing them out when an angry housewife arrived on the scene. The abuse she gave those men in German was lost on the hunters since they understood not a word, but they realized what a mistake they had made. The good woman arrived in the town about the same time as the embarrassed hunters. A charge was laid against them for destroying her tame ducks. However the matter was settled out of court for a princely sum for the farm flock. Needless to say these men got such a ribbing from the townspeople that, for a time, they hardly dared appear on the street.

As might be expected in a mushroom town there was no water supply except wells on each property and no sewerage. The hotel where most of us boarded had a well in the cellar — no cemented basement. The water tasted all right but was apparently contaminated. The result was a serious outbreak of typhoid; there were few deaths but scores went down with the scourge. The local physician, Dr. Neely, later M.P. for Humboldt, did excellent work with the primitive resources he had to work with and there is no doubt that he saved many lives.

When I arrived in Kamsack in December 1905 the town had a population of about 800 with two hotels, four general stores, and some small businesses. The townsite was a surrendered portion of the Cote Indian reserve and the reserve adjoined the town on the north and east. The lands held by the Doukhobor community abutted the townsite on the west and south. The community had its own trading centre at Veregin, 9 miles west; so, at that time it seemed that the town was prevented from expanding and its business was restricted largely to railway employees. Later, in 1906, a sale of Indian lands adjoining the town was negotiated and this aroused great hopes in the business community.

The citizens' enthusiasm was expressed in a banquet tendered Inspector Graham of the Department of Indian Affairs. At this gathering there was much speechmaking and exchange of felicitations, abundance of good food and plenty to drink including a special service of high grade champagne. The evening was extremely warm and the drinks were much in demand, champagne for the wets and ginger ale for the teetotlers.

An amusing incident at the gathering was the error of a prominent citizen, a well known abstainer, in mistaking the champagne for ginger ale and partaking liberally of it. Sitting next to him I pointed out his mistake and he immediately got up and left barely able to get home. This was the story of the year and my friend, a pillar of the church never heard the last of it.

A cash payment of \$40,000 to the Indians was a condition of the land surrender and notice that the money was being forwarded had been received at Kamsack. The train from Winnipeg came in during the night and one morning Harry Harvey, the postmaster, came to the station quite perturbed. His postal bill called for one more locked bag than had been delivered by the carrier and naturally, his suspicions were worrying him. On checking up on the platform we found the missing bag intact apparently overlooked by the mail carrier. To complete the story the package containing the money in bills was safe in the bag though owing to some departmental carelessness

was not even registered.

I had a great deal of business with the Doukhobor Community as Veregin their headquarters was a flag station and all freight and other charges were handled through our Kamsack office. I found them scrupulously honest and straightforward and never had the slightest trouble with them. Peter Veregin, the spiritual leader, was not a business man but was, I believe, honest and conscientious and did his best to look after his people.

It was not my first contact with these people. In the summer of 1903 as station agent at Woodridge I had responsibility for a number of adjoining flag stations. The community furnished many men for C.N.R. extra gangs whose earnings helped supply the capital needs of the organization. A force of 300 of them was employed at a gravel pit near my station all loading and unloading of cars being done by manual labour. Feeding these men was at times, somewhat of a problem for the company cooks, as the Doukhobors were rigid vegetarians and were naturally suspicious of the food. I arrived at the pit one day to find the men on strike and three work trains tied up apparently caused by a cook using lard in pie crust. I had often talked with the interpreter a young man who spoke very good English. The roadmaster and I discussed the situation with him and it was finally agreed that the interpreter, Alexi, would be put to work with the cooks, thus be a guarantee to the men as to the food served them. Years afterwards I found Alexi on a farm near Arran and we had much to talk about regarding the gravel pit days.

A discordant element among the Doukhobors kept things stirred up. In general they seemed to be fighting Peter Veregin and the business managers; but it was long afterwards that they blossomed out as a separate sect, the Sons of Freedom, but I never had heard that name in my three years in Kamsack.

At one time a parade of these malcontents passed through Kamsack on their way to find a warm country supposedly promised their leader by Jesus. East of Kamsack they all discarded their clothing and it took a body of Mounted Police to force them back to their community.

Some years later, these disturbing conditions developed into a wave of terrorism, the burning of homes, barns and schools in which a number of people lost their lives. The individual perpetrators were difficult to discover, particularly since the law-abiding and orthodox Doukhobors were in terror of punitive action against any who informed on them. However, the authorities took as strong action as the limited evidence warranted and, ultimately, all the terrorist group left Saskatchewan.

The Doukhobor community was also plagued by suspicion of misuse of funds by some of their business leaders and this, undoubtedly, hastened the breakup of the Christian Communist settlements in the province, many of the younger men deserting the collective system and taking up land for themselves. The latter called themselves, "Independent Doukhobors," and generally were so successful as farmers that this hastened the end of the communities in Saskatchewan.

While most of the men were away in the summertime, the Doukhobor women kept the farm work going. I recall thirty of these women haying near the town south of the Assiniboine River; they were in the habit of bathing in the river during the heat of the day; bathing suits were not in evidence and a party of mischievous young men from the town decided to pay them a visit and finally got "fresh" with them. The result was that the women turned on them en masse and gave them such a beating that some of them were badly marked for a long time. They returned sadder and

wiser and with more respect for the virtue as well as the physical strength of Doukhobor women.

In April, 1907, the prairies were visited by the worst snowstorms that I have seen in my thirty years in the West. In early March the snow disappeared and there was every evidence of an early spring. Thousands of settlers, mostly from the United States, started for their newly acquired lands along the Canadian Northern Railway lines in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Then, about April first, the storm struck with a fury that almost completely blocked the railway. Our yard was full of cars with settlers effects and for a week or more no train arrived from Dauphin. Near Invermay our first snow plow and engine were buried in snow, a second and third from Kamsack met the same fate. It was eleven days before we could get a train through to Humboldt. Most of all towns and villages were short of food and fuel and it was a red letter day when a relief train with snow plows and workmen arrived from Dauphin with a carload of flour, also hay for the settlers' livestock. About a hundred dead animals were thrown out on the tracks in our railway yard and some settlers lost all their horses and cattle en route to their new homes. Old timers and old railroad men said they had never known anything like it. When finally the blizzards let up and trains started to move it was weeks before the yards were cleared and things got down to normal.

I felt very sorry for these settlers who suffered such losses. Later scores of claims came in for the animals lost in our yards and I had to certify to these before they could be paid. Most of them were reasonable in the amounts claimed; but a few were so obviously inflated that I was reminded of Van Horne's famous remark that the best way to improve the breed of a cow was cross her with a C.P.R. locomotive.

I recall a few remarkable railway incidents, during by service at Kamsack. On one occasion my checker found a car missing from a freight train that had just arrived from the West. The conductor and breakmen were positive that the car was on the train when it left Humboldt. Finally, the car was sighted on the Veregin Hill standing upright and clear of the track. The conductor remembered a bump about this place but it did not seem possible that the car had become uncoupled, thrown clear of the track and that the train connected up again. A snapshot of the car where it stood was taken by Rev. Mr. White and the miracle properly recorded.

In another case an engine ran into an open switch at Veregin and travelled on the hard frozen ground stopping a few feet from the kitchen of the station house terrifying the foreman's wife and her children.

A small spur at the east end of the station platform at Kamsack was the scene of another case when the switch had been left unlocked and a passenger train ran into the spur throwing a private car into the platform cutting and scattering timbers and stopping within a few feet of the station.

A most interesting character I saw frequently in these days was Corporal Gorski of the Fort Pelly detachment of the Mounted Police. He was a charming man with the stamp of culture and refinement that seemed to set him apart from the rest of us. At the time I knew nothing of his background but after he had left the police I read in the paper of a "fashionable wedding" in Chicago. He had married a young European lady referred to as a distinguished artist and the item listed Gorski as the stepson of Paderewski, the great pianist and later President of Poland. Some years later I read that he and his wife were living in Paris under rather unhappy circumstances.

In 1907 a cyclone in the Fort Pelly district north of Kamsack destroyed

a number of homesteaders' cabins. It was of very great force and would have created havoc in a town or thickly settled area.

About that time a well drilling outfit was working near the Russell hotel and had difficulty finding a supply of water. One night there was an explosion that shook the building and scared the wits out of the hotel guests. Most everyone rushed out in bare feet and night shirts — no pyjamas in those days — and soon most of Kamsack's citizens were assembled in the streets looking for the trouble. It was judged at the time to be a gas pocket that had been tapped during the day by the drill. The driller found his outfit buried and decided it would be too expensive to dig it out. Years later natural gas was found near the town in considerable quantities and this was probably from the same source. It would have been a great boon to Kamsack had this been realized at the time.

Father De Corby, the rector of the Catholic mission of St. Phillips on the Cote reserve was another interesting link with the past and though nearly 80 was a general favourite and both loved and respected. He had been a missionary with Sitting Bull's tribe at the time of the destruction of General Custer's force on the Little Bighorn in Montana. He told me he had long tried to get the chief to embrace the Christian religion. Sitting Bull, who was really the medicine man of the tribe, always replied that he did intend to become a Christian but wanted first to get a lot of big knives' scalps. Big knives was the Indian name for United States Cavalrymen. He had many interesting stories to tell of the battle and of the booty brought into camp by the Indians, swords, saddles, watches, gold coins and such. Pressed by the American troops the tribe took refuge in Canadian territory and soon faced a desperate shortage of food.

According to Father De Corby there were 4000 fighting men in the tribe and as game was quite insufficient to meet their needs Indian parties drove off large numbers of ranchers' cattle. The camp was visited by the famous Major Walsh of the Mounted Police, then a corporal, with a force of only two men. The chief had promised Walsh to stop raids but they continued. One day the Corporal with his two men rode into the camp with some ranchers who identified two of the Indians who had driven off their cattle. Walsh strode up to the chief, shook his fist in his face and said, "You promised to stop this thieving, now I am taking these two men but next time I will take you, the Chief." The good Father said he held his breath while the two arrested men were led away expecting any moment to see Walsh and his men torn to pieces. These Indians had been through a successful battle with American troops and, said Father De Corby, the slightest sign from the Chief would have sent them into action but the very daring of Walsh ensured his success.

Rev. Mr McWhinney of the Crowstand Presbyterian Mission and Rev. Mr. Owens of St. Andrews Anglican Mission were good men and made their contribution to the welfare of the Indians and the early settlers.

I might mention a few of the lighter stories that so often add color to the life of small communities.

There was an abundance of game particularly ducks and prairie chickens in the vicinity of Kamsack in those days. As the birds were much more wary after the first shoofts it was the custom of many old hunters to anticipate the open season by a few days and the Mounted Police were constantly on the alert for such venturesome Nimrods. Two prominent citizens, one of whom was a justice of the peace, were having a pre-season shoot and one of them had brought down some ducks, when a redcoat spotted him. The justice had not been seen and in due time the offender appeared in court

before the same J.P. The latter with a straight face and with mock severity lectured him on the importance of observing the game laws and complimented the Officer on his vigilance. Later, of course, the justice squared himself with his friend by paying half the fine.

I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the following story but it was current in the town and well could have been true.

A local hunter surprised by the police rushed back to town and appeared before the J.P. with a show of penitence; he confessed that he had broken the game laws and was ready to pay the penalty. His Worship said this was so unusual that he hesitated to impose a fine. However, the citizen insisted and claimed he wanted to accept punishment to save his conscience. The cad reluctantly imposed a minimum fine of one dollar. At that time an informer was entitled to half the fine and the offender presented his claim for this credit; thus he paid only fifty cents. He was just pocketing his formal receipt when the officer arrived to inform on him.

When matters were explained the faces of the J.P. and the Policeman were redder than the Officer's coat.

The village of Pelly, 22 miles north of Kamsack has an interesting historical background. Situated a few miles from the site of the Hudson's Bay Company trading post of Fort Pelly on the banks of the Assiniboine River, the district was an important centre of trade with the Indians from the establishment of the first post in 1796. A flat-bottom steamship service between Fort Garry and Fort Pelly was inaugurated in 1881 and continued for many years. Three miles from Pelly is the site of Fort Livingston on the banks of the Swan River now marked by a cairn with a plaque. This fort was the first seat of government of the North West Territories and the headquarters of the North West Mounted Police, a force of about 200 men being stationed there.

The steel reached Pelly in the summer of 1909 but it was a year before regular train service was provided. Prior to the arrival of the railway at Kamsack, little actual farming was done; but there were many small ranches in the district at a time when the nearest railway was the C.P.R. main line. Herds were driven for shipment usually to Whitewood a distance of one hundred miles as the crow flies but, probably, one hundred and fifty by the meandering trails.

One of the leading pioneers was E. A. W. R. McKenzie, a colorful character, who, as a young Scottish immigrant had come to Fort Gary, with General Wolsley's troops in 1870. I had met him previously in Kamsack in 1905 and questioned him about the people of the district. He said that the ranchers were mostly from the British Isles, a majority Scottish; then he added with a broad grin, "We have a considerable number of 'Improved Scotsmen'." This was a new term to me so he explained; "Outsiders may call them halfbreeds but between ourselves they are 'Improved Scotsmen'." He told me that the Anglican Mission School of St. Andrews on the Indian Reserve had many comely native girls who were given a good, basic education and taught elementary domestic science. Therefore, it was natural that many of the young ranchers should have selected their life partners from the girls at the mission. "Very good women", said Mr. McKenzie, "good cooks and diligent workers; they look after their husbands and their children and are a credit to their background and to the mission school". After we located in that district in 1909 I could heartily subscribe to this tribute.

There were several Doukhobor villages east of Pelly and a considerable number of "Independent Doukhobors" on their farms. The orthodox or community Doukhobors had occasional brushes with the police. There were few crimes of violence, the offences being usually of a petty nature, often relating to their special economic and religious ideas. In one of such instances the police found a guard of thirty or more women around a barn in the village in which two offenders had taken refuge. The members of this sect are pacifists, in theory at least. The officers gave up trying persuasion and returned to Pelly where about a dozen young men were sworn in as deputies. After some light skirmishing the women guards turned on the officers and the posse and handled them roughly, tearing the clothes nearly off some of them; meanwhile the men of the village kept out of sight and the officers and posse returned to headquarters without effecting an arrest.

The Doukhobors had located in that area in 1898 and 1899 and were well established in 1909 with cultivated lands and substantial houses and other farm buildings. The better homesteads were taken up but many Ukrainian immigrants were coming in and accepting the heavy bush homesteads many miles from the railway. These people were an interesting study to me; their homeland, the Ukraine was, for centuries, a battleground between East and West, a struggle for the souls of men between Christian and Mohammedan. Their history was tragedy personified. Most of them had come to Canada from the province of Galicia in Austria and at first they were known as Galicians. Some objected to this designation and said they were Ruthenians but I had never heard them call themselves Ukrainians until the close of World War I. In the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire the province of Galicia established its own independent government under the name of West Ukraine. This was perfectly in order following President Wilson's declared policy of self-determination and in line with similar action by Hungary, Czecho-Slovakia and Yugo-Slavia. These people then called themselves Ukrainians and an ardent national emotion was aroused in them. This feeling became intense when the little state was invaded and subjugated by aggressive neighbors. Once again tragedy had befallen a brave people, whose only crime was their desire to be free.

What these people accomplished in clearing their timbered lands is written on the landscape of the country. But the taming of the wilderness in which Anglo-Saxons, Scandinavians, Germans and Slavs joined hands is a saga in itself and stands for all men to see. There was no place for the idler, the luxury-loving or the parasite in those pioneer days. Such, if they ever came, soon departed and the sturdy souls who were not afraid of toil and hardship alone remained.

The Mounted Police played a colorful part in the early life of the settlement. One of the duties of the force was a regular patrol over outlying districts. Often bachelor homesteaders, injured or ill were rescued or assisted by the police who kept vigil in the coldest weather over a very large territory. The early settlers in isolated districts owed a great deal to these fearless riders who exemplified the highest degree of devotion to duty.

I trust that our future historians will give appropriate recognition to this fine body of men for the great public service they have rendered.

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